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of Intelligence*

Intelligence Memorandum
Office of African and Latin American Analysis
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Somalia: Dealing with Aideed

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Summary

Although Somali warlord General Aideed has suffered serious setbacks as a result of UN military operations, he believes he can bleed UN forces with small-scale attacks and ultimately face down UNOSOM (United Nations Operation Somalia). His military capability is limited but sufficient to maintain low-level sniping and hit-and-run attacks indefinitely if he is not arrested or driven from the capital. The longer he remains at large and continues harassing UN personnel, the better his chances of intimidating UN officials and coercing Somali civilians into acceding to his quest for power. Leaders of other factions in Mogadishu and outside the capital generally hope the UN defeats Aideed, but they are awaiting the outcome of the conflict cautiously and will almost certainly question the UN's competence and resolve if Aideed is not dealt with quickly and decisively.

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Background

Recent attacks against UNOSOM forces in Mogadishu [] indicating an upsurge in clan warfare have focused attention on warlord General Aideed. This paper--using a question and answer format--briefly outlines Aideed's tactics, strategies, and capabilities to undermine UNOSOM's ability to fulfill its multiple missions. []

What is Aideed's Strategy? What Does he Want?

In our judgment, Aideed hopes to score a dramatic political victory over the UN by escalating violence in Mogadishu to a level that forces UNOSOM either to negotiate with him to end the fighting, so intimidates a major troop contributor, like Pakistan, that it withdraws, or causes the UN to abandon military operations in the capital altogether. Facing political marginalization, primarily because a UN-sponsored reconciliation process has limited his ability to use violence and intimidation to garner support, he has launched this desperate effort to restore his reputation for ruthlessness at the expense of UNOSOM. The longer he is able to pursue this campaign, the greater his chance of bolstering his warlord credentials, gaining renewed support among Somalia's gunmen, and frightening into renewed submission the traditional leaders, intellectuals, women, and other groups that the UN has sought to empower. []

What is Aideed's Capability to Disrupt UNOSOM Operations?

Aideed does not have sufficient forces in Mogadishu to launch large-scale strikes at UNOSOM's military bases, [] His 300 to 500 armed fighters

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[redacted]

In the capital are capable only of guerrilla style harassment operations. Nevertheless, they have conducted numerous sniper attacks and hit-and-run raids in recent weeks, including the murder of 6 Somali employees of the UN-run newspaper on 6 July. Since UNOSOM assumed control from a US-led UNITAF coalition in May, 39 UN soldiers have been killed and 127 wounded in action. Aideed can effectively halt UN military, political, and humanitarian operations in Mogadishu as long as he remains at large--with the core leadership of his faction--to coordinate these harassing actions. If he forces UNOSOM into a defensive posture--

[redacted] he may gain sufficient mobility in Mogadishu to orchestrate a highly-effective urban insurgency that UNOSOM would have difficulty rooting out. [redacted]

How Do Other Faction Leaders View UNOSOM's Conflict With Aideed?

We believe continuation of the conflict between Aideed and UNOSOM appreciably increases the risk of renewed clan warfare in Mogadishu. UNOSOM risks becoming mired in factional disputes and hostage to banditry and feuding militias--much as members of UNOSOM I's 500 man Pakistani battalion became virtual prisoners in Mogadishu last year. [redacted]

In our judgment, Somalia's other warlords have adopted a "wait and see" attitude regarding Aideed's conflict with UNOSOM. [redacted]

Outside the capital, clan conflicts have subsided for the time being, but there, too, factional leaders appear to be awaiting the outcome of UNOSOM's fight with Aideed.

- If UNOSOM prevails, Aideed is arrested, and his military capability broken, anti-Aideed warlords like Generals Morgan and Hashi Ganni would doubtless seek to grab former Aideed-controlled territory. Aideed allies--especially Omar Jess--would scramble to find new associates or may even be forced to flee to the countryside and revert to banditry as they attempt to regroup. Crime and factional disputes would remain a problem, but UNOSOM would almost certainly enjoy greater leverage and could expect improved cooperation in areas where UNOSOM forces are operating.
- [redacted]

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- If the threat from Aideed is not dealt with quickly--either by arresting him or chasing him from the capital--UNOSOM's credibility as a peacemaking force could be fatally undermined, in our judgment. Self-preservation alone would convince many Somalis that they had to take up arms again. At the same time, factions outside Mogadishu would resume efforts to intimidate UN forces and manipulate the UN reconciliation process. []

Will Arresting Aideed End the Threat?

In our judgment, arresting Aideed offers UNOSOM's best opportunity to restore credibility to the UN peacemaking mission in Somalia. There are, however, significant risks associated with capturing Aideed. Although most Somalis support UNOSOM's efforts to arrest Aideed, his detention would almost certainly spark violent demonstrations in his southern Mogadishu enclave--where most UN offices and UNOSOM headquarters are located. If UN troops are forced into a bloody firefight during detention operations or appear ineffective by allowing him to slip through a high-visibility manhunt, popular support for his anti-UN campaign might swell significantly. Even if Aideed is captured, poor management of his incarceration and trial could fuel further violence. We believe, for example that bringing Aideed before an international tribunal and charging him with crimes against humanity risks inciting a backlash among xenophobic Somalis. Sporadic, anti-UN protests would also likely result if Aideed were killed during an arrest attempt, although we believe violence in this event would be disorganized and limited to a few Aideed loyalists. []

Arresting Aideed will contribute to conflict resolution in Somalia only if it is done in conjunction with a broader campaign to jump start political reconciliation. Aideed's popularity and stature in Somalia have diminished significantly since the UN intervention, and we believe it is unlikely that he could play such action into martyrdom.

- Although his lieutenants, like the wily Osman Atto, almost certainly will try to organize anti-UN and anti-US moves to force Aideed's release, so many of Somalia's factional leaders, traditional elders, intellectuals, women, and others have expressed their displeasure with Aideed in recent weeks that, in our judgment, a well-orchestrated public relations campaign accompanying such an arrest could greatly limit the duration and intensity of any violent backlash.
- Focusing a potential judicial proceeding on Aideed's crimes against Somalis--highlighting such actions as the recent killing of locals employed by UNOSOM, for example--would probably strike a more responsive chord among Somalis than criticizing his attacks against Pakistani or Italian forces. []

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~~Secret~~**UNOSOM: Building the Tower of Babel**

UNOSOM not only faces significant security and political challenges posed by Somalia's contentious and warlike factions, but also must grapple with an internal command structure and force composition that are cumbersome and unwieldy. UNOSOM currently includes forces from some twenty nations, and military planning has been hindered by national rivalries and recriminations.

Morale among UNOSOM forces is being poisoned by a growing perception that third-world forces are disproportionately assigned combat missions while troops from Western industrialized nations are assigned logistical tasks and less-hazardous combat support roles.

-- Moroccan forces took heavy casualties during a sweep of Aideed's headquarters area in mid-June. [REDACTED]

Arresting Aideed also risks inciting a wave of clan-based vendettas against his Habr Gedir. Habr Gedir leaders have received assurances from UN officials that their clan will not be punished for Aideed's crimes, but UNOSOM will almost certainly have to make clear to Aideed's rivals, especially Ali Mahdi, that vengeance will not be tolerated. In addition, if UNOSOM is to successfully revitalize a political reconciliation process empowering a broad base of Somali society, warlords will have to be disabused of the

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notion [redacted] that UNOSOM's action against
Aideed legitimizes the other warlords' role in the civil war and signals victory for their
quest to seize power by force. [redacted]

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